

Response to Stevenson *et al.* 2003. "Electronic Field Guides and User Communities in the Eco-informatics Revolution"

## Response to: "Electronic Field Guides and User Communities in the Eco-informatics Revolution"

*John A. Burton*

---

Key Words: *bibliography; field guide; history.*

---

The authors state that R. T. Peterson developed the first modern field guide, which is correct. However, they continue by claiming, "Essential to his system were color plates with paintings of similar species...." The work in question is not listed in the bibliography, and it is clear that the authors had not consulted this edition of the book, since one of the features of Peterson's early field guides was that many of the plates were in monochrome. Peterson, in his 1934 introduction states: "Color is often unnecessary, if not, indeed, a confusing factor... so most of the diagrams [sic] are carried out in black and white." I would also point out that Peterson's "wonderful skill as an artist" was not apparent in this first volume, but was developed later.

The authors also state: "We can review the history of field guides in general by studying the history of field guides to birds." Although I agree with this statement in general, without wishing to accuse the authors of being Americocentric, I feel that they should have made it clear that they were reviewing the history of the field guides to American birds, as the history of field guides elsewhere has significant differences, which may have influenced authors and artists such as Peterson.

Responses to this article can be read online at:  
<http://www.ecologyandsociety.org/vol11/iss2/resp1/responses/>

---